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THE LIMITS OF SCIENCE AND HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

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International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on the Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education

Speech title: "SCIENTIFIC LINGUISTICS, A NEVER-ENDING HISTORY"

Conference summary:

By Professor Jacques COULARDEAU,
(Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne - France).

The year 1866 seems to have been a turning point in scientific linguistics when the Linguistic Society of Paris banned all papers and presentations on the origin of language or the creation of a universal language. It meant the domination of the field by the comparativist approach. Ferdinand de Saussure locked up the debate with his two concepts of diachrony and synchrony. I would like then to examine how in more modern times we witnessed the emergence of the hypothesis of a single origin of human articulated languages, the geographical position of this origin in Africa first, and today in Black Africa. At the same time, the phylogenetic approach of biological studies has slowly spread to social sciences, first sociology, second anthropology and archaeology, third today linguistics. That's when archaeology with Sally McBrearty rejected the idea of a Neolithic revolution that negated the migrations out of Black Africa that had taken place before the peak of the Ice Age (21,000 years ago). Consequently, these migrations out of Black Africa became a major field of archaeological research with Sally McBrearty working on South African sites. In the same way, the research brought by Yuval Noah Harari and some others stating the existence of a symbolic revolution around 70,000 years ago, brought up the simple question: What languages did these people speak in the various places considered in the world? Black Africa was rejected again. The Americas were not considered. And it's when the Denisovans were discovered and since then Asia has become a major archaeological field. The latest development brought up by Julien d'Huy implements the phylogenetic arborescent technique of biology to the study of myths and

traditional or popular culture at the world level: any form of a myth can only be explained by finding out what it developed from and in what environmental conditions it evolved, and that implies older forms of the myth and the material circumstances in which these human beings lived when they started developing their myths. The oldest form of a myth is not the origin of it because a myth has to collect, in the daily culture of the people, the elements that will coalesce into the concerned myth. I will consider the case of the Mayas and glyphic literature and Romanesque and Gothic arts in Medieval churches in Europe. The priest or some literate member of the church had to tell the story behind these representations for the people to understand, appreciate, and remember them, or connect them with what they already knew orally.

I will then consider the structural linguistics developed from Noam Chomsky into Universal Grammar. This Universal Grammar has never been able to develop semantics within its own system as clearly shown by the Generative Semantics of George Lakoff, and the Applicational Generative Linguistics of Sebastian Shaumyan.

Science is always a temporarily approximate vision of what it considers. It is never the final truth about anything for two reasons: First, what any science explores is constantly evolving following phylogenic dynamics that are contained in the very objects of such scientific studies. Second, any new knowledge appearing in the field concerned causes a complete restructuration of what we knew before that new knowledge. The best example is that Gustave Guillaume's "trois aires" theory is today to be rethought due to the archaeological research reached in our world since the time of its formulation in 1959-60.

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(IFIASA) ROMANIA
Web: <http://ifiasa.org/>
E-mail: ifiasa@yahoo.com